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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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In 3 Hh  
Housekeeper's Chat

Monday, December 8, 1930.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Food Fallacies and Superstitions". Program based on information by Laura McLaughlin in Hygeia, October, 1929. Menu from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Radio cookbook"; "Corn and Its Uses as Food."

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"That was a good dinner, Aunt Sammy," said Uncle Ebenezer, as he pushed his chair away from the table, and unfolded the evening paper. "A mighty good dinner. Salmon croquettes and dill pickles are two of my favorite foods. Especially do I like cucumber pickles, in any form. And yet," mused Uncle Ebenezer, "I can remember when a cucumber was looked upon with suspicion. My mother thought they were poison. She always soaked them in salt water, to draw out the poison. Do people still do that, Aunt Sammy?"

"A few of them, perhaps. Most of us have learned to know better. However, I have a friend who thinks that eggplant must be peeled, sliced, and allowed to stand a couple of hours under a heavy weight, so that the poison will ooze out, before it is fried. She doesn't know that eggplant would be just as nutritious if cooked in slices without squeezing, just as are potatoes, apples, or onions."

"Interesting," said Uncle Ebenezer. "Very interesting, to see how yesterday's food fallacies disappear. What are some other foods which used to be considered poison? Tomatoes?"

"Yes, tomatoes had to live down a very bad reputation. And now we couldn't get along without them. Bananas, too, used to be thought indigestible; now it is agreed that ripe bananas are good food for everybody. And cheese, according to the old textbooks, was in itself indigestible. Of course, if you eat too much of it. So are many other foods".

"What about spinach?" said Uncle Ebenezer. "Don't you really think that spinach is over-rated? I mean the idea that spinach must be served every day, because 'it's good for you.' You don't serve spinach every day, Aunt Sammy."

"No, I don't serve it every day, and neither does the Menu Specialist put it in her meals every day. However, it is true that spinach perhaps stands first, among all vegetables, in vitamins and minerals; and the mistake, or the fallacy, is in thinking that spinach itself must be served frequently. In a nursery school I know of spinach means any form of greens -- kale, mustard greens, broccoli. There are dozens of greens, fresh or canned.



To these nursery school children, spinach means any form of greens. They like greens. Perhaps it's because no one ever tells them to eat a certain food because it's good for them. Tell a child, or a grown person, for that matter, to eat a certain food because it's good for him, and he'll dislike it from the first."

"The perversity of human nature," said Uncle Ebenezer. "There was another food fallacy in our home. My mother believed that food in tin cans became poisoned two or three minutes after the can was opened. She always emptied canned foods immediately. And yet, I happen to know that the danger of tin poisoning from the can is negligible; no case has ever been proved."

~~Nor~~ "Nor is it harmful to eat acid foods, like tomatoes, which have been cooked in aluminum dishes. Did you know that, Aunt Sammy?"

"Yes! Nor is it harmful to eat fish and milk at the same meal, but lots of people think it is. Didn't we have salmon croquettes for dinner? And don't we have oyster stew quite often? Both of them are combinations of sea food and milk."

"While we are on the subject of food fallacies -- think of the food fads which spring up from year to year. Do you need iron? Sure, everybody needs iron. But how many people know that weight for weight, raisins contain much less iron than does fresh spinach, or meat. We can get much more iron from some other foods than we can from raisins. Then there's the yeast fad, and the bran fad, and several others we might mention."

"What about the craze for reducing?" asked Uncle Ebenezer.

"Wait a minute, till I find an article I read on the subject." I rummaged through a pile of magazines, and found something I had been wanting to show Uncle Ebenezer, who decides about 15 times a year that he ought to reduce. This is what I read to him:

"The safest general rule to give for reducing diet is to tell people not to eat between meals, and always to get up from the meal while they still feel hungry. To the argument that overweight runs in families, some one has aptly replied that it is rather a case of good cooks running in families."

"Is that so?" said Uncle Ebenezer. "Then it's really your fault that I am -- well, growing slightly stoutish."

"Don't interrupt me," I said. "Let me read you another paragraph."

"Prejudices exist against certain food combinations. Cranberries or other acid fruits and milk, or even peaches and cream, do not make a beautiful combination, because the acid curdles the milk, but surely it makes little difference in its digestibility, whether it is curdled fifteen minutes before, or two minutes after it enters the stomach. One may feel safe at breakfast in eating grapefruit and following it immediately





by cereal with milk. Perhaps the combination does not sound enticing, but there is nothing harmful to the digestion in eating cucumbers and milk or fish and milk at the same meal. Any valid objection to lemonade and ice cream at the same meal must refer to quantity, for <sup>no</sup>one objects to the same foods served as a fancy brick, with stripes of lemon ice and strawberry ice cream."

"Try to make my orthodox Aunt Lucretia believe all those things," said Uncle Ebenezer.

"With time, (" I continued, "fallacies disappear. For various reasons, there are always some faddists, some persons who just want to be different. Many eat too much, either spasmodically or by habit, and then lay digestive disturbances to a particular food. But we all think sometimes. Now and then some one evolves a good theory, good in the sense of setting others to thinking. Then the old fallacious theory is disproved, and we are ready for new ideas.' There, that's all, and now I must concentrate on my menu."

"Why not use our dinner menu?" asked Uncle Ebenezer. "Oyster Stew; Scratch Backs; Dill Pickles; and Apple Pie and Cheese. What's the matter with that menu?"

"Not a thing. I'll use it." However, I'd better repeat it now, and then tell you exactly how the Recipe Lady makes an oyster stew. Pencils and paper ready?

Oyster Stew; Scratch Backs, or some other crisp corn bread; Dill Pickles; and Apple Pie with Cheese.

Most of you know the old-fashioned corn sticks or "scratch backs". If you don't you can have any other kind of crisp corn bread you prefer. You'll find several recipes in the bulletin "Corn and Its Uses as Food."

My recipe for apple/<sup>pie</sup> is in the Radio cookbook. So I'll just give you the recipe for oyster stew. Seven ingredients:

1 quart milk	2 tablespoons flour
1 quart oysters	Salt
4 tablespoons melted butter	Pepper
	chopped parsley

Heat the milk in a double boiler. Strain the oysters from their liquor and pick out any small pieces of shell that may be clinging to them. Heat the oyster liquor slightly and remove the scum which rises to the top. Blend the butter and flour and stir into the milk until thickened. Add the oysters and the liquor and cook for five or ten minutes or until the edge of the oysters begin to curl. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve in hot soup plates with finely chopped parsley sprinkled over the top.

Tomorrow you are to have a talk from the Garden Specialist on kitchen window boxes. He has some new points to tell you about, so be sure to tune in. Tuesday: Kitchen Window Boxes.

